

NOV 19 1975



THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY JOURNAL

volume 3 number 2

EDITORIAL

On Tuesday 14th of October we finally laid the concrete for the foundations of the new Zendo. After two false starts one hundred and fifty tons was finally laid to rest on top of much carefully laid hoggin and rock filling. It was the culmination of a job we originally expected to take a few weeks.

Back in March when we began to clear the site I remember thinking, "Oh we should have this done in a fortnight." First of all we struck rock and then large holes started to appear which turned out to be a network of drift type coal mines running through a seam that comes to the surface just below the site level. This discovery meant that we had to dig out the partially filled tunnels to discover how far under the site they went and then after consultation with a structural engineer it was decided that we would have to take the tops off the tunnels and dig out all the loose fill that they were packed with and then fill them in with carefully packed rock.

The architect redesigned the foundations incorporating thick reinforced concrete beams under all the load bearing walls and an oversite raft 150mm thick of reinforced concrete to allow for any settlement that might occur to spread over a wide area.

While all the digging was going on - which took some months the local building inspector looking rather amazed at the sight of a gang of rather unlikely looking labourers attacking the hillside with blunt picks and shovels, shaking his head came and went muttering to himself.

Finally the mines were all exposed and the site levelled - greatly aided by the intermittent use of our tractor which has a hydraulic front loader (we had to spend several months doing some major repairs to it.) Then the foundation trenches were dug and much of the reinforcing steel bent to shape and we were nearly ready for the concrete or so we thought.

The day before the concrete was due to arrive we discovered that placing the steel was not the simple matter that we had anticipated and as we were obviously not going

to be ready in time and so we had to cancel. We fixed the next date for about a week later but this time the evening before the ready mix firm cancelled due to some financial mix up of theirs but finally on Tuesday the 14th it all began to happen.

First of all the concrete pump arrived. This was a lorry mounted affair with an 80' long hydraulically driven boom that swung over the site carrying a pipe through which the concrete was pumped from the car park behind the existing Zendo. This pump saved us an enormous amount of work in fact it would not have been possible to lay so much concrete in one day without it. It pumped the concrete to more or less where it was needed without the need to wheelbarrow it about - saving a great deal of work. Once roughly placed it was 'poked' with a vibrating poker to compact it and remove any air bubbles and then tamped flat.

The four of us here were helped by Etty Cook, Francis Bartley, Duncan Sellers, Gordon Bell and Tony Langstone all of whom gave invaluable help with last minute preparation before the concrete arrived and then with laying it. Once the concrete began to arrive we were solidly at it until the last load was laid and tamped flat about 4.30. In fact during one hectic hour six lorry loads (60 tons) arrived and was laid! Everybody was well plastered with the stuff at the finish but seemed to quite enjoy the experience though not one we would like to repeat every day!

It is good to know that at last the building is underway the work now progressing up rather than down! Our next step - the walls will have to wait for a while until we get our finances arranged. But one thing is certain, we have a really well founded Zendo that one concrete expert who saw the foundations declared we could put the Hilton on!

All of us here would like to thank everyone who came to help out it would have been impossible without you.

Zen in Daily Life.

In our Evening Service it says, "To live by Zen is the same as to live an ordinary daily life." This is very difficult to understand. When we first start Zen practice, we look to see what we can get out of it, we search for enlightenment. We become very goal orientated, but we overlook what is most important, the birthplace of our understanding, our life now. If we get caught up by ideas of gaining from meditation we will chase after ephemeral shadows and will forever be fighting and struggling. Meditation is sometimes a struggle of course, but the struggle is to meditate not to try and get somewhere. We have our life and in Zen we learn the value and meaning of it. Meditation is not done by any special rules that will produce some remarkable result, that is magic. It is in fact simply a complete exploration of our life at this very moment.

Stop and look and see what you are doing now, what is going on around you. This is what is valuable in life : because this is all the life we have, this life, now. Don't waste it, cherish it, guard it well. Often we run away from life by not accepting it. We try to fight our depression, our anger, our whatever. But Zen teaches us to face up to those things, to look them in the face and say, "Yes this is my life, it may be in a bit of a mess, but that is my being." and then go on from there. If your life has its mess and most peoples do, or if its empty, its because we make it that way. We can stop and reassess what we are doing and change our ways. Accepting the bad material that we have to start with now, the mess that it is. Don't throw that away when you throw that away it is your life that you throw, accept it and work with it, change it. It is necessary to have the faith that you can work with and change it, that you can make your life better and more positive.

In Zen there are no magic ways of changing yourself, you have to do it yourself. You simply see whats wrong and correct it. The great Zen master, Rinzai said, "I have nothing to teach, come and ask questions and I will cure your ills."

The message of Zen is to value your life, take an interest in it. If you don't who else will? If you are

constant y bored then your life will be boring but if you take an interest in all around you and explore it and find out how life runs then you will have an interesting life. However life cannot always be fascinating, and so taking an interest in ones life will involve hard work sometimes. But stop and see if you would rather have a bit of hard work and an interesting life or would you rather be lazy and have a boring life. Being bored is not pleasant but it is of course not possible to be always doing new and interesting things, sometimes we have to do things that could be just boring and repetitious. Stop and see what value there is in what you are doing, find the interest that is there. If you just lapse into fog and dreams and boredom you loose the spirit of your life, that is so difficult to find.

This may sound rather selfish, it is. We start in training wanting to know whats in it for us. There may be those who start training for purely altruistic motives but I have yet to come across any. But as our training grows and we explore our lives we make remarkable discoveries we don't need to be told about them we will find them for ourselves, although it is useful to have some guidance. We will find for instance that our life is not separate from others and consequently we cannot live in isolation from the life all around us. Our life is dependant on its surroundings and existence around us is dependant on us too. It is therefore not possible to live our life at the expense of others.

What has this to do with ordinary living? Simple, how often do we sit and dream about being somewhere else, about doing things better, about being happier. Don't it is not necessary. Take an interest in what you are doing now, examine it, explore it, find out what it is, this is where the Truth lies. Marvellous and surprising, here, now, in everything that we do whether well or badly there is the Truth. But when we act carelessly we loose sight of life so we should take care of what we do, care of what we think and care for ourselves and those around us. This is true morality. If you go into a workshop you might see a few simple rules on how to use the machines and this is for your own protection. It might say, "Don't bash your thumb with a hammer," this is not some Absolute Law of the Universe just saying that you probably wont like the consequences

do bash your thumb. You are always free to bash your thumb but you will have nobody to blame afterwards but yourself. Morality says that you should treat other people like your own thumb, which they are. We share in existence, when you damage something you damage part of existence and that is your existence. Stop and look. There is another interest-point here and that is that we often go into the workshop pick up the hammer and accidentally bash our thumb with it. Then because there is a rule against it we pretend at the cost that we didn't really hit it and we hide it and go around saying, "Oh no I didn't hit my thumb, I don't need a plaster on it, I am good and don't break the rules. I can't have hit my thumb can I?" Silly isn't it? The rule is not there in any absolutist sense it is just advice. If you hit your thumb with a hammer it hurts.

Just stop and look into your life. There may be areas of confusion where you cannot see. Don't worry about them, leave them till later. Start with what you can and go on from there. Stop and look at your life because that is where Truth lies for you and as you grow in understanding you will find that you are a ~~part~~ part of a greater whole and you will be able to live in accordance with that too. But in doing so you get more life and that is I think, what most people really want, more real life.

Daiji Strathern.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Ordinations. On September 12th Paddy Ball and Helen Krasner were both ordained having completed their term as postulants. They were given the names of Houn Kozan and Houn Jimyo. We offer them our congratulations and wish them every success with their training.

Bodhidharma Day. On October 5th we had a celebration in honour of Bodhidharma the founder of Zen in China through whom we trace our lineage back to Shakyamuni Buddha. "When we think wholeheartedly of the merit of his actions we see that it has illuminated a thousand autumns and still embraces

his uncountable family warmly in the Dharma. Just as one branch of a tree can produce five flowers, so his Transmission has flowered and its perfume fills countless places in which Buddhist training is being truly undergone."

The Priory was open to everybody who could come for the day. about 20 people did amongst whom were $\frac{1}{2}$ doz live children who were entertained with a hastily erected sw bubble blowing and various games and along with the adult much feasting and a cream tea! The day started with a lecture on Bodhidharma given by Daiji, this was followed by zazen and lunch. After lunch there was a rare opportunity for people to get together and talk! after which more zazen and then a delicious cream tea followed, after a suitable pause by the main ceremony of the day. The day ended with supper, another sumptuous repast. Everyone especially the children seemed to enjoy the day.

Segaki. On the 31st of October we performed the ceremony of Segaki for the benefit of all living things in the six lokas. This ceremony is the traditional feeding of the Hungry Ghosts and also those who have recently died. It is not assumed that those who have recently died are hungry ghosts, the merit of the ceremony is offered to them in whatever realm they may be.

Founders Day. As has become traditional we celebrated Founders Day on the 1st of November, the day after Segaki. For the monks Founders Day is the most important day of the year. On this occasion we commemorate the death of our Founder, the great priest Keido Chisan Koho Zenji and on the day of gratitude for his great compassion we offer him our Buddhist training.

Retreat Dates. We will be holding week end retreats on the following dates:- November 29/30, January 3/4, January 12/13, February 1 and March 6/7. There will be a week long retreat on December 13/21 which will be a fairly intensive retreat only open to those who have previously been to the Priory. There will be a Jukai retreat in March 1976 we will publish the exact dates in our next issue, which will be for those who wish to take the precepts and become Buddhists or those who wish to reaffirm their commitment.

Week-end retreat in aid of the Throssel Hole Priory Appeal. A retreat will be held from Thursday, January 29 to Sunday, February 1 1976 in a farmstead in mid Wales. The week-end

11 cost £2 per person plus £2 to cover the cost of food.
1 profit to be donated to the Throssel Hole Priory Appeal.
ere will be accomodation for fourteen people only. For
rther information contact Cherry Harris, 50 Archfield Rd,
istol BS6 6BQ. Tel. Bristol 40035.

Meditation Group in Litchfield area. Nick Churchill is
tempting to start a meditation group in Litchfield in
affordshire, anyone living in the area who is interested
ease contact him at 154 Netherstone Lane, Litchfield,
affs.

Throssel Hole Priory Journal.

The Throssel Hole Priory Journal is published bi-
thly with six issues a year. The subscription rate is
per annum. Please send your subscription to:-

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Northumberland NE47 8AL.

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